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[HOW TO PRUNE ROSES]

A short guide on how to prune your roses bushes for the best results throughout the year.

How to Prune Roses

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How to Prune Roses

Introduction

The purpose of this document is to give you an idea on how to prune your rose bushes.

I know that the first time I had to prune my roses after winter, I was very unsure of what the final outcome would be. I didn't want to kill my roses, and yet I knew I had to cut them back.

So, I went on a little training to see how the Pros prune their roses, and after a couple of years of successful pruning, I thought I'd share my knowledge with you.

By reading this document and seeing the photos I've taken, you can at least have some idea of what the final result of your pruning will look like.

This was something I really needed, so I hope it's something you will find useful.

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Goals

Here are our goals with regards to a successful rose pruning:

Cut back unwanted branches

After a full year and a hard winter, it's inevitable that you will have some branches that will need to be cut back. Perhaps one of your branches is growing too close to a wall, or is encroaching on a nearby rose bush.

Whatever the reason, now is the right time to help guide your rose bush into growing how you'd like.

Allow your roses to regain their strength after a year of growing

Your rose bushes will have used a lot of their energy and nutrients surviving the winter, and your rose flowers may not have looked as full or as colourful as they did at the beginning of the season.

Now you can give them a chance to regrow and send much needed sap and nutrients to the branches that you have specified after pruning any unwanted branches.

Choose which branches have the best possibility of giving good flowers

As I mentioned in the last paragraph, you have the ability now to easily remove any unwanted branches. This allows you to remove any sickly branches, any branches that appear to only produce leaves, etc.

Give each of your main rose branches space to grow and flower

This is a really important part of pruning your roses. You really want to have enough space between each of your main branches, allowing them to grow full leaves (needed for photosynthesis and for sucking up the nutrients from the ground), and giving them space to start flowering.

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Equipment Needed

There are just 2 things you will need:

- Some good, almost impenetrable gardening gloves (those prickles can leave a nasty hole otherwise)
- Sharp (the sharper the better) secateurs

Here's a photo to give you an idea:



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The Initial Rose Bush

Here's a picture of the rose bush I'll be using as my example, before I started pruning it.

To give you an idea, it's about 2 meters in height.



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Step 1: Make Some Space

This step is just about getting rid of the “fluff”. Just taking off the top few branches and bushy leaf area so that you can see what you’re doing.

It doesn’t really matter how much you cut off of your rose bush, you’re only trying clear a “viewing space” for yourself so that you can remove more of the branches from lower down.

Here’s an image showing you what the result should (could?) be like:



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Step 2: Remove the Leaves

This step is all about ensuring that you can see where the branches/stems are growing to ensure that you are able to make choices you're happy with when it comes to removing or keeping certain branches.

Here's an image showing you what the result might look like:



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Step 3: Choose your strong branches

This step might be a little tricky if it's the first time you're doing this, but this is exactly the reason for this document.

You have 2 goals here:

1 – Find your strong branches (or, “don't select any super old or sickly branches”)

2 – Give these chosen branches some space to grow and flourish

The first goal should be self explanatory, but with regards to the second goal of giving your branches space to grow, I recommend a **minimum** of 10cm space around each branch. This allows them to get bushy and produce many new stems containing flowers.

Any branches that you are choosing to cut away, just cut at the base of that specific branch.

Take a look at the branch that was cut in the photo below (you can see that the branch that remains does not have to be the “main” branch):



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Step 4: Cut your remaining branches

The final step is an easy one, now that the previous steps are where all the decisions needed to be made.

In this step, your goal is just to cut back your remaining branches to a height of around 30cm. It may sound drastic, but it's possibly one of the best things you could do for your roses.

If it sounds a bit harsh, here's a photo to show you what I'm talking about. And, you can see the pile of off-cuts next to the remaining rose "bush" (is it still called a bush if it's not bushy? ©):



Final Thoughts: Look after your roses

You should have pruned your roses after the last frost, so waiting a couple more weeks should ensure that you have no nights with freezing temperatures.

Once it's time to water your roses more than twice a week (once the weather starts to warm up), ensure you fertilise them.

If you live in South Africa, I can FULLY recommend **Ludwig's Vigorosa**. I didn't believe the sales pitches regarding this, but I finally succumbed and bought a bucket of the granules, and all I can say is, WOW! My roses have never looked so good.

Another good tip is to mix in something like peanut shells, which are a naturally tough product that will help to keep your soil loose. Roses like soil that is easy to spread roots in, and they need soil that water drains well in. And with peanut shells, this is almost guaranteed. (The more clay content in your soil, the more shells you can use).

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Keep in Touch

So, I hope this document proved helpful to you. To keep in touch you have a couple of options:

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